

# VII. Working with Ethnic Media

## How to Communicate with Ethnic Media

While all under-represented groups are uniquely distinct, there are some basic similarities among most ethnic groups that are important to understand. Below are some tips and guidelines to follow when working with ethnic media. Again, many of these tips will overlap culture to culture and some of these tips will also apply when working with mainstream media.

- Have a spokesperson from the same culture as the audience you are targeting. While it is not imperative you have a Latino speak to Latinos or an African American speak to the African American community, your extra effort will be appreciated by the media, particularly if there is a language barrier. However, make sure your spokesperson is knowledgeable on the subject and not just of the appropriate ethnicity.
- Train your spokesperson. Take the extra step to make sure that your spokesperson understands the culture and nuances of the audience being addressed. Be prepared to answer difficult questions — How come only one staff person speaks Spanish when most of your customers or clients are Latino? Who is the highest-ranking African American in your organization?
- Avoid generalizing all races when making reference to specific groups. Do not say “Asians” when referring to Chinese, rather, say Chinese.
- Have media materials available in the language you are targeting. Many ethnic media outlets have minimal budgets and cannot afford to translate materials. The decision to cover a story or not is often based on the availability of language-specific materials. Your story is more likely to be run if you can provide the news release, letter to the editor or op-ed piece in a specific language. However, be aware of incorrect translations. Have an expert proofread before sending any materials out to the media.
- Know the media that you are pitching. Read the publication first, listen to the radio station and watch the TV program.
- Ensure that your story is relevant to the media. As when you are pitching any other news story, ask yourself: “Why would a reader, viewer or listener care? What will the recipient of this information gain from this story?”
- Use of proper titles is very important as a demonstration of respect. Similarly, each nationality has a distinct culture, customs and values. Find out how to handle introductions in advance.

- Always be professional. Ethnic media is a multi-million dollar industry, staffed by trained journalists, reporters and writers. They do their homework and they expect you to do yours.
- In California, most ethnic media subscribe to the Associated Press, United Press International or other news services.

## **Asian Pacific Islander**

The Asian Pacific Islander (API) media is as diverse as the population it serves. Each nationality in the API community has distinct language dialects and culture. There are newspapers, magazines, television and radio stations targeting APIs statewide and nationally. While some are in English, most are in Asian languages, such as Chinese, Korean, Vietnamese or Japanese. Asian language media has been a booming business, especially over the past decade due to the rapid growth of Asian immigration.

- Reporters assigned to cover mainstream media events generally speak English.
- When addressing Asian language reporters, use simple and direct language and avoid idioms when possible. It's unnecessary to speak extra slow or loud unless reporters request it.

Not all Asian Pacific Islanders are alike. The U.S. Census Bureau has identified more than 26 distinct language groups among Asian Pacific Islander populations. Those with limited English proficiency rely on Asian language media for their daily news. While some older Koreans and Japanese read Chinese, most Asians rely on their own community's media for information. Within the Chinese community alone, several dialects are spoken, although the written language is the same.

## **African American**

- Do not overlook local neighborhood papers. They are considered a valuable source of information in many African American communities. According to a recent study by a regional African American community newspaper, 58 percent of its readers reported using the community paper as their primary source of purchasing, health and social event information.
- Is it African American or Black? Although the term African American is gaining use, particularly by broadcast media, there is no definite rule that is universally accepted. For example, some people over 60 years of age prefer the term Black, while some people under 50 prefer the term African American. The terms are often used interchangeably.

## Latino

- Some Hispanics find the term “Hispanic” offensive. It is seen as a label for all Spanish-speaking people and it also assumes an unwelcome bond with Spain. The word “Hispanic” originated in the 1970s and is seen as a way to group many races into one category.

In the late 1980s a movement began in the community to change the term to “Latino,” identifying people more with their Latin origins. The term is now commonly used in California.

- When working with the media or Latino audiences avoid using the term “Chicano,” referring to Mexican Americans. The term has taken on political implications that, for those unaware of the history or community, may backfire to the person using the term.
- Latinos vary in their backgrounds and opinions, therefore, avoid generalizations, i.e. “The Latino community is most influenced by traffic safety programs for children and families.”
- Spanish-speaking media has experienced a significant increase over the past few years due to the rapid growth of the Latino population resulting from immigration and birth rate. In Los Angeles alone, Spanish-speaking TV and radio stations outnumber English-speaking stations.
- Ensure that translators or spokespersons use a “cosmopolitan Spanish” to be understood by Latinos of various origins. Results will be much greater if the Spanish used is not geared to one group exclusively.